

## 1 Samuel 31

We last encountered the men of Jabesh-gilead in Chapter 11. Nahash the Ammonite had come upon them with his army and demanded, as a price for peace, that all the men consent to have their right eyes gouged out.

And who saved them from shame and dreadful mutilation? Saul, the newly crowned king of Israel. He sent around the remains of a yoke of oxen to summon a huge army to march across the Jordan and relieve the siege of the city. It was his first and perhaps greatest military victory. In this chapter, the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead partly return

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the favor when they remove the body of Saul displayed in disgrace on the wall of Beth-shan.

This summarizes the arc of Saul's life, one of the more perplexing characters in Scripture. We see him start as the handsome but modest young man, only to become a king wracked with murderous jealousy and in the end a sad and defeated figure. He doesn't fit the neat good guy/bad guy labels of fictional literature. In this very real but flawed person we find more evidence of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

### Questions for study and discussion:

1. David refused to kill the Lord's anointed. Who does finally take Saul's life?
2. As Israel's first king, how is Saul emblematic of the history of Israel?
3. What is symbolized by Saul's relationship with David?

